Connectivity & Innovation: The Power of the IKECA Community
Serving the Commercial Kitchen Exhaust Industry Worldwide

The IKECA Journal is an industry publication for cleaners, fire marshals, insurance professionals, facility managers, vendors and other interested parties in the commercial kitchen exhaust cleaning and inspection industry.

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Trained, Qualified, or Certified? Understanding the Differences

If you were talking about horse racing, you would understand that a trifecta requires picking the top three across the finish line in the right order. In the KEC arena, the trifecta is being trained, qualified, and certified—most likely in that order.

If you talk to some of the veterans of the early years of commercial kitchen exhaust system cleaning (sadly some are no longer around to visit with us), many of them have said they started out not knowing what to do, they just had to figure it out. Trial and error ruled, failure was a great instructor, and ineffective practices were eventually abandoned or considered unacceptable. That evolution led to the training that’s in place today across the industry. Standard writing entities and Authorities Having Jurisdiction have the expectation that businesses engaged in the Fire Code Maintenance and the Life Safety Industry expect proficiency, skill, and how to accomplish those things in a safe manner. Structured and organized training is the best approach to accomplishing what needs to be learned. Declaring that you are “Trained” must include adequate training for all that your scope of work includes, and continued training for the emerging technologies that are being installed in today’s modern commercial kitchens.

Beyond being qualified, the third leg of the trifecta is what truly identifies the professionals of the KEC industry. “Certification” should be what defines those who have accomplished a level of subject matter expertise. Subject Matter Experts (aka SMEs) are individuals with a deep understanding of a process or requirement and typically have developed expertise in their discipline over time that includes the rigor of continuous study in their field. The IKECA Certification Exams are uniquely valued by the scrutiny and discipline of psychometric development from an independent third party.

Here’s the bottom line. IKECA Certification Exams are not about Training, your experience, or how Qualified you are. It’s about how well you know the material in the International Mechanical Code (IMC), International Fire Code (IFC), the ANSI/IKECA Standards Trio (C-10, 1-10 & M-10), NFPA 96, and OSHA Standards that are applicable to the scope of the work environment. Take advantage of the IKECA study guides, and invest the time and effort to be prepared to take the exam. Once passed, maintain the continuing education requirements. The IKECA Certifications have been developed as the most rigorous in the KEC industry and are recognized by the AHJ and Insurance Loss Prevention Communities. IKECA Certification is more valued for that reason.
IKECA Standards, Certifications Embraced in More Jurisdictions

Josh Smith, Deputy Fire Marshal for the Charleston, SC Fire Department, recently retired from his seven-year post. Before vacating the role, he announced via an email to KEC contractors that as of December 31, 2023, working within city limits of Charleston as a permitted Kitchen Exhaust Inspection Contractor (KEIC) will require IKECA Membership for the KEC company, and IKECA Certification for its technicians.

In addition to IKECA Membership and Certification, a second option that is currently available to Charleston-area KECs is submission of a long list of items: liability, vehicle, and workers’ comp insurance; documentation of formal training hours for the past year; proof of at least 500 hours of work in the field over the prior 12 months; and examples of inspection reports and service stickers, to name a few. Starting in 2024, this option will no longer be available, and KEIC permitting will require IKECA Membership and qualifying Certification.

The City of Charleston joins Boston, MA, Vancouver, WA, Madison, WI and a growing number of other municipalities across North America, in setting new permitting requirements that help “ensure that fire protection systems and interrelated equipment are altered, cleaned, designed, installed, maintained, repaired, serviced or tested by individuals and companies who have demonstrated a basic knowledge to perform such work in accordance with the applicable codes and nationally recognized standards,” according to the City of Charleston’s permit application.

Alaska, Ohio and several other US states have also written into state fire code a requirement to inspect, clean and maintain KEC systems according to ANSI/IKECA standards. Individual, grass-roots efforts are growing to add IKECA or other Certification requirements to their state-level statutes as well.

Why the growing interest?

Like commercial businesses, labor and manpower in the public sector is perhaps just as challenged these days. Permitting processes that require the review of dozens or hundreds of documents per application are inefficient and likely prone to potential errors and possible overtime hours.

As a municipality with a responsibility to protect the lives and property within its borders, cities are more frequently recognizing outside certifications as a qualifier for contractors who can be proven to be qualified to do the work.

According to OSHA, a “Qualified Person” means “one who, by possession of a recognized degree, certificate, or professional standing, or who by extensive knowledge, training, and experience, has successfully demonstrated his ability to solve or resolve problems relating to the subject matter, the work, or the project.” IKECA Certification satisfies this requirement.

Timing Is Everything

Three years ago, the IKECA Board convened an independently-facilitated Strategic Planning process and came to an important realization: the future success of IKECA depends on widespread adoption of ANSI/IKECA Standards and IKECA Certifications by individual municipalities.

To meet this goal, the Board recognized that significant resources would be required, in both money and time, over the next few years. Some of the plans that were put in place and are in progress now:

- Accelerating the review cycle by two years for each of the ANSI/IKECA Standards to ensure concurrence with referenced code and best practices
- Launching a major three-year initiative to evaluate and re-write qualifying exams for the IKECA CECT,

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From the Desk of the Executive Director, continued

Kathleen A. DeMarco, CAE / IKECA Executive Director

CECS and CESI Certifications, so that by 2025, all Certification exams will have been professionally developed and evaluated and meet credentialing program best practices, reflecting the knowledge and skills required to perform the duties described.

• The implementation of online, web-based exam testing, with live, online proctoring services, provided by an expert third-party. In 2022, online testing and proctoring for the following exams became available: Certified Exhaust Cleaning Specialist (CECS), Certified Exhaust System Inspector (CESI), and two Boston Certifications (BCCS and BCSI); the newly-revised Certified Exhaust Cleaning Technician (CECT) exam will be launched online in mid-2023 and is also still available in the current format through IKECA.

As IKECA focuses on infrastructure like modernizing its credentialing and Standards programs, there has been significant financial investment by the organization. There has also been countless hundreds of hours of leadership, volunteer and staff time spent working through the steps in the strategic plan, towards IKECA’s ultimate vision: to be the internationally recognized association directly impacting the standards and procedures for commercial kitchen exhaust cleaning, inspection and maintenance, and IKECA’s mission to be “committed to fire prevention and life safety by advancing the quality of cleaning, inspection and maintenance of commercial kitchen exhaust systems worldwide.”

Join us on this journey: talk to your local AHJs. Invite them to join IKECA for free and get familiar with its free AHJ resources. Educate them on the ANSI/IKECA Standards, IKECA Certification requirements, and put them in touch with IKECA headquarters to talk about why and how their municipality can rely on IKECA to help set the standard for KEC work in their jurisdiction.
Anyone who is involved in IKECA knows the importance of the sense of camaraderie, the opportunities for learning, and the resources available to clean to the highest standard. The International Kitchen Exhaust Cleaning Association was created and built on those very principles. But what does it really mean to be an IKECA Member?

The IKECA Membership Committee created a marketing campaign to showcase the true meaning of IKECA membership, using our own acronym, I.K.E.C.A.:

“I” represents Insight. IKECA members gain insight into the KEC industry including its leaders, standards, processes, and procedures. In other words, the comprehension of the many components there are to this industry, and what it takes to keep it afloat.

“K” stands for Knowledge. Whether it be through collaboration with other business owners or attendance at one of IKECA’s two annual Conferences, IKECA members gather and share knowledge on best practices for KEC operations, human resources, websites and marketing, customer relationships, and so much more.

“E” symbolizes Education. As an IKECA member, discounts on IKECA-provided education are a significant benefit. IKECA members are also the only companies who have access to the PECT Designation program for their technicians as a tool to learn the basics of NFPA 96 and OSHA standards. From ANSI/IKECA Standards to Certification exam study materials, and from biannual Conferences to virtual Roundtables and Webinars, there is so much opportunity to further your education on new technology, best practices, business management and more.

“C” signifies Community. Many IKECA members say that this is the most valuable aspect of their IKECA membership. Certainly, this may not be considered a “tangible” value but is one that carries a lot of weight. As a member of this organization, the network created in this niche market with like-minded KEC owners, their technicians, Authorities Having Jurisdiction around the United States, Associate Members, and other industry leaders is simply not available anywhere else. Relationships cultivated, either personal or professional, within IKECA are those that will stand the test of time.

Finally, “A” advocates for Achievement. There’s no mistaking that a sense of pride comes with being an IKECA member. Through IKECA, the opportunity to earn an IKECA Certification, create that professional image so many companies crave, and utilization of new tools and techniques to grow your business, illustrates the ability to achieve success in the KEC industry.

Outreach to non-IKECA member companies, especially by those of you who already realize the value of the I.K.E.C.A. community, is so incredibly important. The vision of IKECA is the adoption of our ANSI/IKECA Standards into every city and state fire code, to provide the most advanced education and Certification, and to foster meaningful connection among like-minded individuals. In order to create this future, we need members to support the mission of fire prevention and life safety, and that all starts with a little I.K.E.C.A.

Share Your Ideas

Write an article for an upcoming issue of the Journal

Not sure about writing an article? Our professional staff will help you “polish” your article. Don’t let the thought that “I’m not a writer” stop you from sharing your ideas or perspective.

Need more incentive? Earn CEUs!

Need continuing education credits to maintain your certification? Earn 0.3 CEU for submitting an article for publication in the IKECA Journal.

Questions? Call IKECA at 410-417-5234 or email info@ikeca.org.
Greetings from the north from your Canadian Committee. Our past year’s focus was concentrated on IKECA brand recognition within the AHJ community, primarily in the Ontario region.

Our past efforts have proven successful and we’ve experienced AHJ membership growth and are continuing to gain momentum. IKECA was present this past year with a complete Canadian IKECA branded booth at the Ontario Municipal Fire Prevention Officers Association Annual Symposium. This was the first complete IKECA Canadian booth ever where my co-chair Bill Doherty and I represented the Canadian Council. We added over 30 new AHJ members as a direct result of our presence.

This event was a great success for IKECA on many levels. First and foremost this was a group effort from our newly formed IKECA Canadian Council. For many years our IKECA effort here in Canada was a lonely mission but one I was passionate about and believed in. Having formed an actual working Council of volunteers with regularly managed meetings, with guidance and support from management, is a very welcomed success on its own; the IKECA Board supported the approval of the first Canadian expense budget, another welcomed success.

I have always believed that representing IKECA truly would gain more recognition and legitimacy through “transparent” representation. Mission achieved this year when representing IKECA at the symposium alongside a direct competitor in our marketplace. Think about that: where else would a direct competitor for the greater good of an association and industry set aside competitive nature and instead create a unified representation for a greater cause? Honestly, if you had told me this was possible years ago when joining IKECA, I would have laughed. This was, in my opinion, possibly one of the greatest successes of IKECA and our committee.

IKECA has already pre-booked this year’s symposium, and we are planning to again bring IKECA front and center to all Ontario AHJs by offering first-hand knowledge and membership as a premier tool and support to their jobs in monitoring our industry. I have always believed the education and support we can offer through the combined experience of our members and associates is an invaluable asset to their roles in our industry’s commercial exhaust cleaning industry!

On our list of to-do’s this year, we are looking to present at individual chapter meetings here in Ontario. As regular training and in-person courses become more of the norm again, it’s our hope to help and participate with the Ontario Fire Marshals Office as Instructors across the province.

We have identified a need to broaden our brand awareness recognition and certification acceptance within and across more of Canada. We will be initiating and conducting introductions to the AHJ and code officials across western and eastern Canada. Our hope is to gain some traction with awareness and acceptance among other Provincial AHJs and grow KEC membership through recognition and certification of KECs across Canada.
Update from the Canadian Chapter, continued
Alex Young, CECS

I want to thank our council/committee for their efforts this past year. As we are all very aware, time on a daily basis is a luxury. Just meeting the demands and everyday grind of owning and running a KEC company and the new challenges with labor and staff shortages is a struggle. Volunteer time is at a premium, and I appreciate and respect all of our committee members’ time and efforts:

Bill Doherty, Pressure Kleen Services Company, Inc.
Mark Holden, The Steam Guy
Geraldine Holden, The Steam Guy
David Tiller, Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management
Robert King, Ontario Fire College Academic Unit

If joining and becoming a part of anything published above interests you as a Canadian member, please feel free to reach out and volunteer. Many hands make less work and we would be thankful and appreciate the help.

Look forward to our next meeting in person and the year ahead.

Update from the Certification Committee
Charlie Cochrane, CECS

The Certification Committee has completed the new IKECA CECT (Certified Exhaust Cleaning Technician) qualifying exam, following standard Accreditation guidelines. This new exam will be more reflective of what a CECT-certified person needs to know based on the consensus we pulled together from the questionnaires sent to all stakeholders last summer.

We anticipate a May or June 2023 launch of the new CECT exam, to be followed by an in-depth review of exam results to insure the validity of the exam. This review is conducted by the independent, accredited certification program consulting firm IKECA has contracted. This is standard practice in new exam releases, and is designed to weed out “bad” questions and improve the exam process. This review will result in a one-time delay in exam results for candidates until a critical mass of exams are reached, but is essential to insure the quality and validity of the exam.

For background, we first had to identify who a CECT was; this person is now defined as a Foreman, Crew chief, or the lead person on any kitchen exhaust cleaning job. Using the job description as the basis, we then created all new exam content drawing on the skills and knowledge such a person should possess. It is important to note that the exam reflects general best practices and not necessarily the exact practices an individual company may follow.

The Certification Committee has been working in concert with the Education Committee to develop educational content for the new CECT Study Guide, to be published prior to launch of the new CECT exam.

With the CECT exam writing coming to an end, the Certification Committee will be turning its attention to the CECS (Certified Exhaust Cleaning Specialist) exam and following the same process that was employed for the CECT development. We are anticipating that in early fall 2023, there will be another questionnaire going out to members and other stakeholders to help mold the content of the CECS exam program.

I want to thank the hard work of all those on the Committee who have been meeting monthly to put this program together.

As we embark on phase two and the CECS Certification we are looking for volunteers to help with the exam development and study guide content development which must go hand in hand.

Update from the Conference Committee
Randy Russo, CECS, CESI

Welcome to 2023! We have hit the ground running and have already shown great progress in getting back to what IKECA is all about. There have been many changes for IKECA but we are keeping up with progress, so progress and business do not pass us by.

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Update from the Education Committee
Dane Bundy, CECS

The Education Committee is excited to announce that we have continued to get new volunteers and are working hard to provide educational content for the membership. We would like to thank all of our new volunteers for their participation and as always we encourage new volunteers to join our team.

We had a great response to the KEC Trivia session at Fall Tech 2022, and the membership wants to see more of these fun interactive sessions, so we will continue to work on providing them. The committee continues to meet regularly and we have come up with a game plan for executing the strategic plan as well as hosting virtual sessions for the membership throughout the year and getting ready for the spring Annual Conference.

I have taken on the role of committee chair for the IKECA ad hoc CECT Study Guide Committee. The purpose of this ad hoc committee is to develop content and study material in anticipation of the new CECT exam launch in mid-2023. Since forming the committee, we have met several times and made great progress in putting together content. We are proud to say after
Update from the Education Committee, continued
Dane Bundy, CECS

much hard work, we plan to have the study guide ready by early April 2023.

As always, please visit the IKECA website and our YouTube channel to gain additional education, review content, and stay up to date with committee initiatives. The Education Committee thanks its volunteers, SMG, the board and everyone who has helped or supported us we look forward to a GREAT 2023!

Update from the Finance Committee
John Muller, CECS

The Finance Committee’s primary roles are to track and analyze the organization’s financial performance, and to advise the Board when it faces decisions that materially affect the organization’s financial strength. This includes working with the management team’s staff to formulate draft budgets each year, and providing insight into the choices that need to be made and the financial impact of those choices. The Committee meets periodically through the course of the year to perform these functions.

The impact of the pandemic, and inflation in the general economy, as well as some significant investments which were made by IKECA in 2022 have led to a significant operating deficit in 2022. The numbers will be finalized and reported on at the Annual Meeting in Charlotte this March. The organization has enough cash in reserve to cover the deficit, and continues to maintain a significant reserve, but the Board and the Finance Committee recognize the need to move quickly back toward sustainable numbers.

The 2023 operating budget calls for a reduction in the year-end operating deficit of more than 80%, and we anticipate returning to breakeven or a surplus in 2024. These conditions, regrettably, did lead the Committee to recommend the first dues increase in six years, a recommendation that the Board accepted. We will also be looking to drive increased membership growth among KECs and other industry stakeholders.

Update from the Insurance/AHJ Committee
Frank Mitarotonda, CECS, CESI

As we all scuffle with this new “normal,” we are tasked with moving forward in the daily whirlwind of running our companies while making time for other events, family, friends, and volunteering for industry Committees. These are all very real issues we face daily as business owners.

The IKECA Insurance/AHJ Committee also endures these conditions and our team is dedicated to the International Kitchen Exhaust Cleaning Association—the worldwide premier organization for kitchen exhaust cleaners, insurance risk management professionals, suppliers, facility managers, and Authorities Having Jurisdiction. The Insurance/AHJ Committee is comprised of volunteers just like you, facing the exact same concerns. Why not join and be a part of the “DOING TEAM,” and let’s move to the next column, getting things “DONE”?

The Insurance/AHJ Committee has developed and completed the Stakeholders’ Guide to aid in the understanding of roles and responsibilities surrounding commercial kitchen exhaust systems. This printed Guide was developed and intended as a reference item only. The kitchen exhaust industry is growing at a rapid pace, and technology is changing all the time. These guides are available for a small cost which will serve as an essential source of information to your potential clients, existing clients, insurance brokers, and carriers, as well as any AHJ. Grow your KEC business, and present your company as an industry leader, with this powerful informational tool only available through IKECA.

Our next goal as the Insurance/AHJ committee is to produce an educational webinar focusing on the Stakeholders’ Guide content. The webinar will provide 0.1 CEUs that can be used toward your IKECA re-Certification. The goal is to have the webinar ready to be rolled out by the end of June 2023 with the content to be extracted from the newly created Stakeholder Resource Guide mentioned above. The Committee will create a presentation, identify speakers from each of the Stakeholders identified in the Resource Chart, and will do

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Update from the Insurance/AHJ Committee, continued
Frank Mitarotonda, CECS, CESI

marketing related to the webinar as well. The webinar will be open to all attendees (both IKECA members and non-members) with a special emphasis on AHJs, Insurance/Risk Management Professionals, and Facility Managers. Speakers will include members of each stakeholder group from the committee.

Make an impact, join any Committee, share your creativity, and if you think it is difficult, well hell yeah. But, DIFFICULT jobs get done, and IMPOSSIBLE jobs take a little longer.

In closing, I would like to thank the members of the team in no particular order, April Elligson from Stringfellow Management, Kathy Slomer, William Doornbos, Alex Young, Jay Wingfield, Scott Justis, Jeff Ralston, Anne Levine, Pete McDonald, and Dennis Poulin.

Update from the Leadership Development Committee
Randy Conforti, CECS, CESI

The role of an outgoing Past President of IKECA is the position of Leadership Development Committee Chair. Before I make the much-deserved exit from the commitment of “volunteerism” to the Board of Directors, my commitment as Chair of this committee comes to a close. Over the years as a member of the IKECA Board, I have experienced that the greatest challenge within IKECA is getting people to volunteer.

You have heard from me as IKECA President, and from presidents before me continually ask the general membership, YOU, to get involved and volunteer. We asked for this in all capacities and forums. The greatest thing a Committee Chair or Board Member can hear from a fellow IKECA member is, “How Can I Help?”

Unfortunately, this statement is very seldom heard. In the last few years, I have read all membership surveys and comments. I have fielded numerous calls, including complaints, from members. The feedback I often receive from members is, “Why do you do this?” “Why didn’t we go there?” “This is what I would like to see.”

Many of our members have an opinion, but most do not want to be involved and/or have an understanding of how decisions are made and take part in what is valuable about our membership and Association.

Sadly there is very poor participation when it comes to membership surveys or voting for new Board Members. At the end of 2022, IKECA Staff sent out a Membership Survey to all members, with several reminders, and only 28 members responded. The 2023 Board of Directors Ballot was sent in November 2022, again with multiple reminders, and only 38 out of 152 Active North American Member companies voted. Surveys such as these are integral in the decision-making process for our Board, our Management Team, and our Committees. When there is little participation, these decisions become more challenging.

If membership is not satisfied with what is being provided, presented, or benefits being offered, please get involved to help with the decision-making process. Or, at the very least, be grateful to those who volunteer and are committed to providing the best membership experience, through the best value.

Always remember and be proud that we are the leaders in the KEC industry, the “Gold Standard,” and we are the only association in the KEC industry with its own trio of standards on how to inspect, clean, and maintain commercial cooking operations. We hold life safety and fire prevention paramount. This only happens, and will only continue to happen, through committed volunteers.

Thank you, IKECA Board of Directors and members, for allowing me to serve on IKECA Leadership for the past several years. I will continue to do my part in moving this organization forward.

Update from the Membership Committee
Kathy Slomer, CECS

Whew, our committee has been busy! I am excited to share that the Membership Committee has cultivated virtual study sessions year-round for IKECA Certification Candidates. The sessions will be held on the last Wednesday of the month and hosted by members of the committee. These sessions will be held monthly and hosted by members of the committee. Just watch
Update from the Membership Committee, continued
Kathy Slomer, CECS

your emails for upcoming dates and click the link to sign up. The sessions will last 1 hour and participants receive 0.1 CEUs. For any current member of IKECA there will be no charge, for non-members the fee is only $25 a session.

We also had some fun developing our new membership marketing campaign for 2023 by coming up with an acronym for I.K.E.C.A.

- Insight
- Knowledge
- Education
- Community
- Achievement

Find IKECA on all of your social media platforms, and like and share our posts!

Don’t forget about our referral program. You can offset your membership dues by referring new members. The program is applicable for referrals of Active North American Members, Active International Members, Associate Members, and Introductory Members. For each paid membership you refer, you get a $100 credit toward your company’s annual Membership Dues! We have eliminated the cap, so you can refer as many as you want—you could potentially have enough credit to cover your whole membership dues payment next year!

As always, thank you to the hard-working members of our committee; Charles Cochrane, Greg Fisher, Dennis Poulin, Jeff Ralston, Don Pfleiderer, and Mr. “Super Fantastic” Frank Mitarotonda. If you would like to join our committee, we would love to have you. Send me an email at Kslomer@koolkleen.com.

Technical Standards Development Committee Update
James Shea

I want to take this public opportunity to thank a person that over the last five years I have called a friend. After being on my team supporting the IKECA Technical Standards Development Committee, Jim Roberts has decided it is time to place one foot clearly on the ground and down off the proverbial soap box.

Jim decided this fall that he would relinquish his duties as Vice Chair of the Committee. He has dedicated hours and hours of time and energy on behalf of IKECA and the Committee. He is a man of honor whom I have come to know and love. During the Committee meeting in late March 2023, please be sure to thank him for the last five years as our Vice Chair, and more importantly for his lifetime of commitment in support of life safety and years of IKECA support and volunteerism.

THANK YOU SO MUCH JIM!

As the saying goes, the few do the work of the many. Yes, this is true. Your recently retired President, Randy Conforti has joined the executive team on the Committee as Vice Chair. Randy is not new to change management, the Committee itself, IKECA Board, or any other driving force which requires concentrated efforts to improve our industry, set minimum safety standards, and acknowledge workmanship and right from wrong. He continuously siphons information, stores it, and springs it on the unknowing when needed in support of our industry and its commitment to safety. I look forward to his ambition and drive to allow me the opportunity to be young again as we take on challenges head-on to drive the trio of ANSI/IKECA Standards into local, state, and national codes.

During the 2022 Fall Technical Meeting, the Committee elected the Chair and Vice Chair. I have remained on as your Chair while Randy Conforti has volunteered to support, drive, and influence the activities of the committee and those ambitions we share to see further progress with our standards.

The Committee has also voted on and approved several other actions including:

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Technical Standards Development Committee Update, continued
James Shea

1. Unanimous vote on the revised M-10 Draft 2023 revision with forward to NFPA for review
2. Request to NFPA for updating the MOU to include the newly revised M-10 Draft
3. Approval to forward M-10 Draft 2023 revision on to ANSI for open public comment phase following no further actions from the National Fire Protection Association
4. Roster review, Application review, and call for membership in stakeholder categories
5. Operations Procedure review, Proposed change to Chair / Vice Chair term limits and unanimous vote to return to three-year term allowing for synergy with the new three-year standards cycle
6. Move to support the coordination of the meat smoker and new technology subcommittees to re-organize as a single committee with committee scope and actions to be focused on capturing all new technologies and challenges facing our industry and preparing for potential incorporation into the ANSI/IKECA Standards through draft proposals.

During the fall 2022 Board of Directors Meeting, as Committee Chair I requested and received approval for the submittal of a PINS Notification request to open the ANSI / IKECA I-10 Standard to begin I-10 revision. The initial call for proposals is now open for you all to participate. Once revisions are made, a call for public comment will also be made, offering another opportunity to provide input on this standard for inspection of commercial KEC systems.

So we once again ask for your participation in the Standards development process. Please review the current I-10 Standard and submit any changes to the standard to support the continued development and enforcement of your Standards.

I wanted to also publicly thank the Committee members for their continued efforts, volunteerism, and mostly their confidence in me as your Chair for a continued three-year term.
CONGRATULATIONS TO THOSE WHO RECENTLY ACHIEVED THEIR DESIGNATIONS AND CERTIFICATIONS!

**PECI Professional Exhaust Cleaning Technician**
- Cullen Adams / Besal Services, Inc.
- Kessai Ebel / Oregon Hood Cleaning, LLC
- Alejandro Garcia / Bare Metal Maintenance
- Delfino Garibay / Oregon Hood Cleaning, LLC
- Kyle Levesque / The Steam Guy Inc.
- Martin Ramos / Bare Metal Maintenance
- Atran Samuel / Oregon Hood Cleaning, LLC
- Anthony Swope / Oregon Hood Cleaning, LLC
- Robert Verdugo / Action Duct Cleaning

**CECS Certified Exhaust Cleaning Specialist**
- Antonio Cabrera / Bare Metal Maintenance, Inc.
- Charles Antoine Dube / Soma Residential
- James Ford, Jr. / Carolina Hotwash
- Sean Kelley / R & T Hood & Duct Services, Inc.
- Nicholas Polson / Guardian Power Cleaning of Dallas
- Jason Thomas / Hoodz

**CECT Certified Exhaust Cleaning Technician**
- Tanner Anderson / Fire Protection Specialists
- Chris Belmore / National Interior Solutions
- Paul Krause / Apex Hood Cleaning, Inc.
- Pablo Ocampo / Apex Hood Cleaning
- Albert O’Neal / Apex Hood Cleaning
- Michael Smith / HVAC LLC
- Jason Stearns / Apex Hood Cleaning
- Peter Tamayose / Apex Hood Cleaning, Inc.
- Charette Taylor / Apex Hood Cleaning
- Andrew Trigg, III / Apex Hood Cleaning, Inc.
- Sara Watson / Sypress Solution

**BCCS Boston Certified Cleaning Specialist**
- Silfreddy Almonte / Chief Fire Prevention & Mechanical
- Chris Belmore / National Interior Solutions
- Brittany Felder / Chief Fire Prevention & Mechanical
- Ryan Healey / Air Restorations LLC
- Kyle Madison / Chief Fire Prevention & Mechanical
- Joelimer Morales / Chief Fire Prevention & Mechanical
- Rebecca Wendtland / Cochrane Ventilation, LLC
- Joseph Williams / Omni Pro Inc.
- Tyler Williams / Apex Ventilation Group, LLC

**New Members / as of February 2023**

**Active North America**
- Jason Thomas / HOODZ International
- Will Ford / Carolina Hotwash
- Brittney Bailey / North Bay Restaurant Services
- Ronald Aroean / PT. Varda Lumbung Berkat

**Active International**
- Paul Chua / Hands On Singapore Pte Ltd
- Cleve Seymour / Island Inspect Cleaning Systems Ltd.

**AHJ**
- Jeremy Daoust / San Diego County Fire Protection District
- Howard Prager / Town of Wappinger
- Dean Schneider / Fremont Fire Department
- Anthony Anglin / City of Monroe Fire Department
- James Schweda / North Shore Fire Department
- Keith Aulds / City of Kenosha Fire Prevention Bureau
- Michael DeMello / Bristol Fire Department
- Richard Giannini / Bristol Fire Department
- Scott Goff / Umatilla County Fire District 1
- Cody Heidt / North Lincoln Fire and Rescue
- Paul Miller / CKFES
- George Crosiar / Turner Fire District
- John Foy / Village of Canisteo
- Katelynn Rise / City of Encinitas Fire Department
- Kenneth Schmertz / Township of Wayne - Fire Bureau
- Robert Ball / Rancho Cucamonga Fire District

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A possible new client is on the other end of the phone. To the ears of the sales manager who has been sweating to meet quota this quarter, this is like music. It was great to hear that we had gained a new client, until...

UNTIL is when theory meets practice. After hearing the prospective new client explain that the pricing for kitchen exhaust vent cleaning (a necessary service) was under pressure due to growing food and labor costs, the company decides to pass on the client. The phone caller said, "I need to know how low can you go."

There is always a sticky moral conundrum when dealing with new clients (or, even with established ones). While it is important for KEC professionals and other fire safety experts to maintain a healthy profit margin and a steady stream of clients, they must also stay competitive in their marketplace. There is also the moral obligation to act honestly and competently at all times. Sometimes, when people are under intense competitive pressure, they may consider lowering their usual standards in order to keep our costs low.

What's the dilemma?

The KEC profession faces the all-too-common dilemma of figuring out how to offer both high-quality work and reasonable rates. Pricing pressure can lead to "rag and tag" or other cost-cutting measures. This can put our morals to the test, forcing us to decide between producing a good job and cutting corners in order to keep our costs low.

Why does it happen?

Under client pressure, businesses may aim to undercut the competition by lowering prices, even if it means compromising on quality or disregarding safety standards. Potential sources of this kind of pressure include customers who expect to pay less than market value for services, intense rivalry from other enterprises in the same market, and company financial constraints.

Businesses may be tempted to skimp on quality in order to meet their customers' demands for a lower price. In this example, we'll use a KEC who has been asked to complete the work for less than its usual rate. To achieve this goal, the KEC may be tempted to "rag and tag" the job, doing only the tasks absolutely essential to get the desired outcome.

Businesses may resort to underhanded tactics in order to undercut the competition from other, similar businesses. If two companies bid on the same work, but one provides a lower price, it's possible that the low bidder is skimping somewhere. Let's be honest: in today's business climate, everyone is under tremendous pressure to not only keep and expand their operations and client base, but also to adapt to the unique requirements of the modern workplace.

And Everyone Is Keeping an Eye on You.

The adage "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas" is well known. Well, that's a catchy motto for a tourism board, but it's not entirely accurate when running a business or managing a company. You must always act as though you are being watched... because you are. We literally carry around high-definition video cameras and audio recorders in our pockets!

My friend, the proprietor of a prominent funeral home (OK, I know what you're thinking: "What does that have to do with our business?") was training a new employee who was at least two generations his junior. He demonstrated to the new intern in the embalming chamber how to dilute the embalming solution in order to reduce costs. The business owner reasoned that with increased product efficiency, he could offset inflation without sacrificing profit. It struck him as a valuable educational opportunity.

In fact, he was offending the morals of his new intern/recruitment without even realizing it. They reasoned that if he was ready to take shortcuts with a dead body, he must be doing other things that they would consider "bad." They recorded him talking in the "prep" area over time and shared the recordings online.

Sure, they were fired, but did their intern even notice? NO! Social justice and honesty had triumphed in their eyes. Let's imagine he sold the company and retired, but that would come at a high price.
What are the repercussions, if any?

As a result, there may be dire repercussions for one’s financial stability and personal security. When they don’t perform things properly, they risk the customer’s safety. Not inspecting, cleaning or maintaining according to industry standards could also pose a serious fire risk. They are endangering the lives of their customers and could perhaps face legal action if a fire occurs as a result of their carelessness. It’s crucial that those who clean kitchen exhaust systems constantly prioritize quality and safety, even when faced with financial constraints.

Is there a simple answer?

Oh, how I wish I could wave a magic wand and conclude this post with, "Sure, there’s an easy way." I would be lying if I said that! Here’s the dilemma though: if you don’t do it right, disaster might strike, and I don’t just mean a natural calamity like a fire.

In order to find a solution to this moral conundrum, we need to shift the way we talk about it. As opposed to trying to save money by skimping on a necessary safety measure, businesses should inform their customers about why it’s so crucial that kitchen exhaust vents are cleaned in accordance with all applicable industry standards, codes and regulations. They need to be made aware of the ramifications that can arise from taking short cuts or accepting a low bid.

Here’s a question to consider which could be posed to a client who’s demanding that your business accomplish more with less resources: “Would you want your auto mechanic to "sacrifice quality" by using "cheap" or "low-grade" parts when your car’s check engine light went on and you brought it in for repairs? Alternatively, how about knowing that your daughter can feel safe driving the car again when it has been repaired, since it’s her primary vehicle?”

It’s easy to take the low road when the possible consequences are for someone else, but when you put yourself in the position of potentially losing out, you’ll never make the wrong call. Each and every time!

Finally, those hired to clean kitchen exhaust systems need to accept responsibility for their actions and make informed decisions. They should be proud of their accomplishments and realize that it is always better to take their time and do things properly.

We can ensure that kitchen exhaust vents are cleaned with integrity and respect for safety requirements if we tackle the underlying causes of this ethical problem and give cleaners access to the tools and training they need to accomplish their jobs well.

Chuck Gallagher is a business ethics speaker, author and consultant and can be reached at 828.244.1400 or chuck@gallagher.com
Small Gas Explosion During Hood Cleaning
Kenny Asselin, MBA, NRP / City of West Bend Fire Department

On Thursday, January 26th, 2023 at 2:40 a.m., West Bend Fire & Rescue was dispatched for a water flow alarm at Qdoba Mexican Grill in the City of West Bend, Wisconsin. Engine 3, Tower 1, and Battalion 1 responded. The alarm company called back and advised it was a false alarm. Engine 3 arrived on scene and advised of a small fire, and subsequent fire sprinkler activation that controlled the fire, prior to their arrival.

West Bend firefighters found contractors on the scene who were there to clean the vents for the cooking hood system. The contractors allegedly told the firefighters that they extinguished the pilot lights for the gas range, but did not shut off the gas supply to the range. Surveillance video appears to show the contractors covering the hood system and around the rangetop with plastic sheeting to contain debris from cleaning the kitchen exhaust ductwork. This plastic sheeting allowed for escaping natural gas to build up in a contained area. A spark of unknown origin ignited the methane (natural gas) that was in the flammable range, causing a small fireball, and subsequently activated the fire sprinkler system.

Firefighters were concerned that the contractors did not turn off the gas valve to the unit. They advised that they had been following this as a protocol for the last fifteen years without incident. The investigation to-date by the incident commander has not yet identified a cause for the leaking gas. However, we can explore possible leak sources for a commercial range/oven. These include:

- Leaking gas valve
- Leaking hose connection
- Leaking gas hose
- Faulty pilot light thermocouple

West Bend Fire & Rescue in a statement reminded homeowners and owners and staff of commercial kitchens to make sure that they turn off the fuel supply to any appliances before any kind of maintenance is performed. Natural gas (methane) has a flammability range between 5% (lower explosive limit – LEL) and 15% (upper explosive limit – UEL). There were no injuries in this case, but the outcome could have been far worse had there been more natural gas in a wider area around the stove.
Five Reasons for Documenting Kitchen Exhaust Cleaning

Jeff Ralston, CECS / Hood Boss / My Tech Pix

As the owner of The Hood Boss, a KEC Company in Texas, and someone with over 20 years of experience in the KEC business, I have first-hand knowledge of why it is vital to take pictures of the services you perform. With an understanding of the importance of proper documentation of work, I created My Tech Pix, a software platform with a mobile phone application (or “app”) that ensures proper documentation of work performed per NFPA 96 rules and guidelines for KEC companies.

Here are five reasons why it is critical to capture and store both before and after pictures of the work performed by KEC companies:

1. Completion of Work: Pictures provide visual documentation of the work that has been done, which can be used as proof for customers that the cleaning was completed and can also be used to show the before and after results of the cleaning. This documentation can also be used to resolve any disputes or questions about the work that was performed, while building trust with your client. Something to be noted: I have spoken to restaurant owners in the past that have stated that there are only a few employees at the facility that are covered by their insurance policy to get on the roof top. This means providing pictures of the work performed on the roof top and in the subceiling helps them monitor and feel comfortable with the work being performed in areas they may not be able to physically monitor.

2. Identifying Areas that Need Attention: By taking pictures of the exhaust system before and after the cleaning, the company can identify and document areas that may need more attention in the future. For example, if a particular section of the exhaust system is heavily soiled, the company can make note of this and schedule a more thorough cleaning in the future. Another example would be documenting an inaccessible area in the horizontal ductwork system that needs access panels to be properly cleaned. Documenting this area by photo documentation allows the client to visually verify the need that is being communicated to them.

3. Attracting New Business: Pictures can be used to showcase the company’s work to potential customers. By having a portfolio of pictures demonstrating the quality of their work, the company can attract new business and build trust with potential customers. In addition, using a professional platform to take pictures during the sales inspection process and then presenting those pictures within the platform can showcase to the client what they can expect after each service. This can provide an edge over the competition.

4. Protection from Liability and Claims: In today’s world, not documenting each of your KEC services could lead to claims against your insurance. I cannot quantify how much money we have been able to save over the last ten years against claims that were made. Because of the pictures we provided, we were not held liable after review. The reason for potential claims can range from something as small as a damaged piece of equipment to a claim that negligence in your service caused the spread of a fire and tens of thousands of dollars in damage. It only takes several small claims against your insurance or one large one for the resulting effect to cost you thousands of dollars in increases to your insurance premiums on an annual basis.

5. Quality Control: Over the years I have come to the realization that I cannot be at every job and neither can my managers. Pictures of each cleaning service can be used by your management staff to evaluate the quality of the work being performed by your technicians and ensure that the cleaning is done to your company’s and your clients’ standards. This will help the company to identify any areas that need improvement and adjust their cleaning procedures.

Taking pictures of your kitchen exhaust cleaning ser-
Five Reasons for Documenting Kitchen Exhaust Cleaning, continued

Jeff Ralston, CECS / Hood Boss / My Tech Pix

services is essential, and it provides an important tool for your company to grow. Having a streamlined picture process that allows you to monitor the performance of your crew and protect your company from claims can drive sales and reduce your labor cost in the office and out in the field.

NFPA 96 requires that KEC work is documented, and there is no better way to accurately and completely document work performed than with picture documentation. A tool such as My Tech Pix is crucial in following NFPA 96 documentation guidelines and also both protecting your company and providing additional benefits through photo documentation.

Getting the ULtimate Advantage

Unlike shop-fabricated and inferior light gauge grease duct door substitutes, the high performance line of ULtimate Grease Duct Access Doors from Ductmate Industries are designed to meet challenges. They are the most extensively engineered, tested, and ruggedly constructed doors available in the industry. As a result, the ULtimate doors are UL 1978 listed, meet NFPA 96 standards, and have been independently tested in conjunction with all of the leading brands of high temperature grease duct insulation.

When life safety concerns and building protection are your main priorities, the ULtimate Grease Duct Access Door line from Ductmate Industries is vastly superior and provides the ULtimate advantage.
What does the future of kitchen exhaust cleaning (KEC), also known as "hood cleaning" look like? In this article, we will examine many emerging, post-pandemic trends in staffing, code enforcement, and equipment, including municipalities' increased use of third-party permitting and reporting processes, which are now required in hundreds of local jurisdictions.

**Staffing Issues**

KEC teams that work overnight and endure tough working conditions or inclement weather must now know electrical and basic HVAC programming. Wages have escalated rapidly, causing pricing issues, and experienced staff feels slighted by new, higher, starting wages. Qualified KEC staff will be more difficult to find and train, leading to scheduling issues. This is already happening, likely to get worse, and there are no clear solutions in the immediate future.

**Code Enforcement**

COVID-19 put a damper on KEC compliance enforcement. However, more cities are starting to require proper KEC vendor certification. Many municipalities are moving toward increased enforcement of KECs training and certifying staff on KEC standards. Some cities, including Boston, Massachusetts, and Madison, Wisconsin, require a test for certification. Insurance companies are also increasing certification requirements. If there is a fire, investigators will be looking closely at a company’s certifications.

Third-party databases are used for scheduling KEC and compliance reporting. KEC vendors are required by law to report all non-compliance issues they see at each location on platforms that pass the data directly to the fire and mechanical inspection departments. Reports for rescheduled cleaning dates are sent automatically, but sometimes do not take into account remodels, shutdowns, or volume of grease. Warnings come from fire departments that actions need to be taken immediately before code enforcement actions are taken, up to and including closing the facility. A copy of the warning is sent to the fire inspection department, so these letters must be taken seriously. Non-compliance reports are acted upon by the authorities, and as electronic reports

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Looking Forward, continued

Don Pfleiderer, CECS, CESI / Enviromatic Corporation

become more timely with downloads directly from job sites, the timeframe for proper compliance will narrow.

Certification requirements are starting to increase with the incorporation of the IFC codes and IKECA C-10 standards, and with increased enforcement by fire-safety entities. Numerous cities are also adding certification requirements to their city licenses for KEC contractors.

Documentation requirements, including proper hood stickers, drawings, and photos are required for compliance reports in almost all jurisdictions now.

Pollution Control Units (PCUs)
There are many types of PCUs in the field, and numbers are rapidly growing, particularly in larger cities.

1. Hood-level filtrations are slowly improving from the old, water-wash hoods to new UV hoods or to high-efficiency hood filters with wash cycles. These systems are not yet prevalent due to the initial cost and expensive required maintenance.
2. In-line standard filtration or PCUs are becoming more common. We see disposal issues and fire issues with MERV products, but overall PCU fire ratings and suppression are improving.
3. In-line ESP filtration is a different type of PCU, and there are more of these across the country. They often work better than pure-filter PCUs and have fewer waste-disposal issues. However, the lack of qualified service staff in many areas is a problem.
4. Combination filtration. Many UV and ESP units also have odor-control filtration. PCU filter disposal is problematic and will need to be dealt with in the future.

Newer Demand-Air Equipment
The increased use of demand-air systems expands the electronics required to maintain and monitor these systems. Computer controls are more sophisticated, and care to avoid remote-access hacking and ensure component longevity will need to be included in KEC technician training.

Direct drive fans with variable frequency drives (VFDs) are replacing the belt-driven fans. Although there is less maintenance with the fans, they do have their own issues.

Smokers and Solid-Fuel Systems
For faster fire suppression in the future and increased maintenance, one trend we are seeing is the advent of dual-motor exhaust fans to keep systems running in case of motor or belt failure. This trend indicates an acknowledgment that a restaurant cannot simply shut off wood that is burning. Another development is the Class 1 duct requirement for these systems. (All grease ducts are supposed to be type 1. Class 1 is another level of safety.)

Numerous fires in the past few years prove smoker systems are becoming less acceptable to insurance companies. Depending on the type, more of these will be treated similarly to the solid-fuel systems.

Grease-Containment Systems
Grease is acidic and corrosive to most roofing materials. Rooftop grease containment is becoming the norm, with most heavy grease-production systems requiring some sort of containment to prevent fire and roof damage. Regulators are also requiring complete containment of rooftop cleaning wastewater, which may make many of the current rooftop grease-containment systems obsolete.

Chemicals
Requirements regarding what is used to clean systems are expanding, including documenting what chemicals KEC vendors are using. Known carcinogens and harsh caustics used for cleanings will be replaced with safer chemicals, although some are not as effective, and most cost more.

Wastewater Disposal
Sanitary sewers are the legal disposal method for cleaning wastewater per the EPA Clean Water Act, and storm sewers must never be used. Many cities are deploying FOG (Fat, Oils, Grease) sensors to track storm-sewer violation sources and impose expensive, non-compliance fines and cleanup costs on violators.

Rooftop wastewater containment is also required per the EPA, and no contained KEC wastewater may go down roof drains that lead to storm sewers.

Outside cleaning wastewater containment is the law. No grease filters or kitchen equipment may be cleaned outside without complete wastewater containment.
As with other storm-sewer discharges, we will see increased enforcement as grease deposition sensors will become more commonplace as the bugs are worked out.

**Safety Issues**
Due to lack of manpower, single-person crews are being used, increasing the possibility of overnight injuries (with no other workers present). This creates follow-on concerns with possible OSHA and insurance compliance issues.

**Newer Cleaning Equipment Designs**
Some of the newer remote-control equipment is starting to make its way into the industry, but there are not yet any true, non-tethered robotics in the field. Viable initiatives are a few decades down the line whenever some of the environmental issues (high moisture, caustics, grease, etc.) with robotic components in grease exhaust workspaces are solved.

**Legal Quagmires After a Grease Fire**
There are more than 3,500 grease fires annually in the U.S., and legal teams are getting smarter. A lack of proper documentation and certification will be detrimental in court, in addition to insurance pitfalls regarding covering losses. We are seeing more stringent insurance requirements regarding proper scheduling, inspections, and documentation.

**Quality Control**
Photos will improve with newer cameras that embed GPS and timestamps into the photos, making faking pictures more difficult, if not impossible. New photos also will require accommodating larger file sizes.

Remote access will allow better system inspections and the possibility of remote cameras tied into security systems to see inside ductwork.

The increased knowledge and additional history of each location will assist Facilities Managers and AHJs differentiate fact from fiction on reports and photo documentation.

**Conclusion**
The future of KEC is, and always needs to be, fire safety. We hope future KEC vendors will be highly trained. We look forward to the elimination of subpar KEC work not performed to a minimum standard of removing all grease and combustible effluent. Future systems properly designed and constructed will eliminate many of the access, grease leaking, and other issues we see today. ♦
Hood Cleaning Service Vehicle

Features:
- Cab and body are separate. Benefits to this are no chemical/fuel odors in cab, a reduction of noise and safety in an accident.
- Motor and burner are installed on a slide so the unit is outside of the body while operating.
- Because of the slide, the motor and burner are more accessible, making them easier to service and re-fuel.
- No exhaust hole needed in the roof.
- Available with 3 bar ladder rack or two bar drop down ladder rack
- Vehicle Specs:
  - Transit T250 Single Rear Wheel Cab Chassis
  - GVW 9,000 lbs

Kitchen System Install/Service Mid Roof

Features:
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- 10’ conduit storage compartment
- (3) 7” pipe storage compartments
- Vehicle Specs:
  - Transit T250 Mid Roof Cargo Van
  - GVW 9,000 lbs
- Options Available:
  - T350 with 9,500 GVW
  - High Roof Available with 79” interior height
  - 40,000 BTU rear heater
  - Shelving, storage bins and tool boxes (shown)
  - Also available with dry chemical fill system and workbench
Are you aware that your business possesses superpowers? It’s true. Like Dorothy and the ruby slippers, you’ve had them all along. So what exactly are these superpowers? Customer Service and Customer Experience. The two are direct contributors to your business’s success – and reputation. Attracting and retaining customers is always your goal. What helps you reach it are these unique to you superpowers. Although linked together, customer service and customer experience also possess notable differences.

Customer Service
Customer Service plays an integral role in customer perception of your brand. The assistance you provide your customers before, during, and after a sale or a service will help to define how strong your superpower will be. When you correctly develop and use the full force of this superpower, you become unstoppable. Here are a few statistics that emphasize just how important Customer Service is:

- 68% of consumers say they are willing to pay more for products and services from a brand known to offer good customer service experiences. (HubSpot)
- A good customer service experience heavily impacts recommendations. Consumers who rate a company’s service as “good” are 38% more likely to recommend that company. (Qualtrics XM Institute)
- If a company’s customer service is excellent, 78% of consumers will do business with them again after a mistake. (Salesforce)
- After more than one bad experience, approximately 80% of consumers say they would rather do business with a competitor. (Zendesk)

Customer service is a crucial component to your success, no matter your industry. Because it helps grow

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Don’t Miss In This Issue

Superpowers Your Business Can’t Ignore, continued

Cindy Price / Federal Heath

revenue and maintain customer loyalty, investing in the right tools and continuous training for your team should be an ongoing priority.

Customer Experience

The customer’s perception of your brand is what defines the customer experience. It identifies you as either a great company that consistently delivers on expectations time and time again or one that can’t seem to get it right. Your fundamental objective should always be to provide your customers with the best experience possible at each touchpoint, creating loyalty. Doing this will help your business succeed in the best – and worst of times.

Some businesses fail to realize the importance of customer experience or do so after losing their business to a competitor. Mistakes happen, but if you recognize the issue, and do what you can to make things right, people are more apt to forgive those mistakes if their overall experience with your business is good.

According to a report by Pega, based on data from a survey of 5,000 business decision-makers in 12 countries, respondents say the most critical components of providing a great customer experience are –

- Enabling elegant, painless interactions (66%)
- Providing speedy service (66%)
- Ensuring that customers feel understood (65%)
- Making relevant information easy to find (63%)
- Being consistent and connected across channels (63%)

I recall an experience I had with a company where I purchase custom shirts with our company logo, for my team. When I received my order, the shirt material was too heavy, and I knew immediately that my team would not be happy. I called the company to let them know I’d need to order different shirts and explained why. What they did next blew me away. They replaced them free of charge. Yes, free. Did they have to do that? No. Did I ask them to do that? Nope. Will I continue to buy from them in the future? Absolutely! Even though it was my mistake ordering that particular style shirt, they were still willing to do what they did, simply to ensure I had a good experience with them.

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Don’t Miss In This Issue

A United Front
Customer experience and customer service involve the entire customer journey. The key to both is consistency. Someone may have a wonderful experience when buying your product or receiving your services, but later may have a negative experience when requiring customer service assistance with an issue. Having both in sync with one another and consistently working on mastering these skills will add strength to your unique superpower and help to define your brand for years to come.

Power Up
Have you ever watched the Avengers™ Endgame™ movie? Then you know it took all the “supers” collaborating to save the world. The same is true for business. With continuous training and consistent execution, your team can rid the world of bad customer service and start creating memorable, lasting experiences your customers will appreciate and remember.

Some businesses fail to realize the importance of customer experience or do so after losing their business to a competitor.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR FREE SAMPLES
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Learn How to Eliminate or Reduce Credit Card Processing Fees

Service First Processing

The cost of processing credit card transactions is often passed on to the customer as a surcharge or higher price. A cash discount offered to customers for credit card processing encourages buyers to pay with cash or ACH payments rather than credit or debit cards. Offering such a “cash discount” can help merchants reduce their credit card processing costs while still offering customers a choice of payment options. Cash discount programs can reduce or eliminate your merchant fees, and replace them with a low-flat monthly cost.

A credit card surcharge is an additional fee that a merchant adds to its customer’s credit card transactions at checkout, to help offset processing costs. This fee, in addition to the item’s price, is typically a percentage of the total transaction amount. Surcharging is becoming more common as credit card transaction costs rise. Still, it is regulated by many countries and some states in the US, which may limit or prohibit the practice altogether. Furthermore, merchants must meet the guidelines posted by card brands to maintain compliance. For instance, cash discount programs are not available in Connecticut and Massachusetts and perhaps other states.

Credit card processing integration helps streamline a business

Businesses are always looking to make everyday processes more efficient. So, integrating your credit card processing into your accounting, inventory, ERP, or management system offers several ways to achieve this added efficiency.

• Automate: Integrating credit card processing to your system streamlines the payment process and eliminates manual data entry, reducing errors and increasing efficiency.
• Access Real-time Data: Integration provides real-time updates on sales transactions, reducing the time it takes to reconcile financial records and improving accuracy.
• Manage customer data: Connecting a credit card processor to your systems can also provide a centralized location to store customer data, such as billing and shipping information, making future transactions more accessible and faster.
• Enhance security: Integrating credit card processing with a management system can improve security as sensitive customer information is stored in a secure database, reducing the risk of data breaches and fraud.
• Improve reporting: The integration of credit card processing with a management system also enables better tracking and reporting of sales and financial data, providing a complete view of the business’s financial performance.

Most major card processors, including Service First Processing, an Associate Member of IKECA and also an IKECA Strategic Partner, work with today’s most popular accounting systems, including Acumatica, QuickBooks, Sage, Microsoft products, and many more.

Level 2 and Level 3 Data can reduce your costs

Certain gateways offer Level 3 data which is used to help businesses qualify for lower processing fees. Level 3 data refers to detailed transaction information, beyond the basic card and customer information. This information is passed along in the background and can lower your processing cost, and a merchant can become compliant in a few steps.

Understanding PCI and EMV

The Payment Card Industry (PCI DSS) was formed in 2004 to establish standards and guidelines for merchants’ handling of cardholder data. The PCI DSS details security requirements for members, merchants, and service providers that store, process, or transmit cardholder data to ensure it is done in a secure environment. Maintaining PCI compliance can be a headache, but failure to do so can be costly.

An EMV credit card (short for EuroPay, MasterCard, Visa) contains a metallic chip that stores cardholder data more securely than a traditional magnetic stripe. The implementation of EMV technology has become widespread globally and is now the standard for card-present transactions in many countries. Due to recent changes in the industry, acquirers will charge merchants an additional fee if they do not utilize chip-enabled technology. Talk to your credit card processor to ensure you are maintaining PCI compliance.

Provided by Service First Processing.
Interested in learning more about any of these topics? Call 855-632-9862.
Don’t Miss In *This Issue*

**Life by Design**
**Bill Wooditch / Wooditch Enterprises**

Direct yourself with purpose. Build the habits that create success. Small accomplishments, every day, are the lynchpin of large-scale achievement. Study, apply, learn, and grow, always working with a clear sense of personal purpose. Form the habits that become your “way.” Master those things which make you distinctive and dominate your field of endeavor.

**Beyond motivation**
Let’s define motivation. Motivation can be viewed as the separation you achieve from a pain or fear while moving toward an external reward or condition. Motivation has a goal line to it, it has an end, the end is comfort or the attainment of those things that can be purchased or experienced as status or validation. By contrast, inspiration is the fire, the passion.

The most effective, are the inspired; they have that glint in their eye, the edge – there is no goal line, no end, there is just the insatiable need to do, to create. Inspiration is where the invisible essence becomes the intangible way that makes the difference – it’s where a person’s “why” engulfs everything in its way. When we are inspired, we become the work and the work becomes us; it is beyond chasing dollars, or achievement, it is about the love of the act for the act itself.

**Be consistent**
Consistency creates expectation of experience. Consistent experience can establish a baseline of earned trust, the essential element which forges and enhances all relationships. Remember your Shakespeare: “To thine own self be true.” The great Bard of Avon may have been informed through the teachings of Socrates, “Know thyself.” Learn and act in concert with the knowledge of self. Be yourself and act consistent with what and who you are.

**Honesty is disarming**
Authenticity is a force multiplier in a relationship. Alignment of action with belief and word is a key to happiness. Extend your efforts beyond the dictates, mandates, boundaries, and constructs of your job, profession, or career. Embody vibrancy and passion from the pursuit of an obligation that nourishes your purpose. Spark, ember, flame, conflagration!

**Maximize your strengths**
Exercise caution not to inhabit a prison of your own design. Believe in yourself, be willing to learn, build habits from discipline and find your direction from purpose. Becoming a victim is a choice. Becoming a champion is a choice as well. Champions live the life they create. It is a life by choice and design. Choose freedom and earn the right to find happiness in both the pursuit and the goal. As the character, William Wallace declared in the movie Braveheart, “Every man dies, not every man truly lives!”

**Work for your freedom**
Make the time to break away from the madness, the deadlines, the rush to achieve, and the anarchy of unscripted uncertainty and just exhale. Do whatever it is you “do” that creates a state of relaxation. When you bounce back, you’ll find the “zone of flow” will respond to the refreshed and ready mind.

Put yourself in play; immerse yourself in this game of life. I remain that kid on the playgrounds of Pennsylvania. To me, the game of business is a game worth playing – each day, I make a diligent attempt to play it well. I seek to improve my game at a stage when the “old way” – the way that created previous success – could be used as a default mode for today’s choices. How many times have you heard, “It’s the way we’ve always done it!” Sound the alarm, heed the loud buzzer and the flashing lights, this is a mindset that is a recipe for failure. Choose not to focus on the competition and react to their moves. If the competition’s offer is better than yours on any particular day or maybe you’re just out-maneuvered, out-fought, or out-thought – tip your hat to them and appreciate the lesson. Bounce back wiser, tougher, and better – always take the initiative and play the game your way.

**Become your toughest competitor**
Do your own pull-ups and push-ups! Manage the effort to realize your expected result. Bring your best game every day. Don’t leave anything on the field. Take bold steps; chance, change, and choice favors the bold. What you do today will influence what happens tomorrow. ♦
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